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SUBJECT: INTSUM 544 - APRIL 17, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. ISRAEL. THE INTERNAL DEBATE OVER ISRAEL'S FOREIGN POLICY CONTINUES BUT THUS FAR HAS NOT PRODUCED SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL REALIGNMENTS. INDEED:

(A) THE COALITION PARTNERS CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT'S STANCE ON THE PEACE PROCESS.

(B) THE OPPOSITION LABOR ALIGNMENT REMAINS CRITICAL OF THE CONTINUATION OF SETTLEMENT ACTIVITIES AND THE REFUSAL TO APPLY THE PRINCIPLE OF WITHDRAWAL TO THE WEST BANK.

(C) DOVISH ELEMENTS HAVE SUCCEEDED IN CARRYING THE DEBATE INTO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, AS INDICATED BY THE LETTER TO BEGIN FROM RESERVE OFFICERS CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT'S HARD-LINE POLICY AND THE SIZABLE DEMONSTRATION IN TEL AVIV.

2. THERE IS CONCERN WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THE COALITION OVER THE DANGERS POSED BY BEGIN'S TOUGH POLICY, SPECIFICALLY THE LOSS OF THE CHANCE FOR AN AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT AND DAMAGE TO THE US-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP. ON THE OTHER HAND, HARD-LINERS OPPOSE WHAT THEY VIEW AS THE EXCESSIVE
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CONCESSIONS BEGIN HAS MADE ON THE SINAI AND PALESTINIAN ISSUES. THESE ALREADY HAVE IMPAIRED ISRAEL'S BARGAINING POSITION, IN THEIR VIEW, AND WILL GENERATE ADDITIONAL EXTERNAL PRESSURE FOR MORE CONCESSIONS.

3. THE ABILITY OF THOSE WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT BEGIN'S POLICIES TO BRING ABOUT CHANGES OR A REALIGNMENT OF POLITICAL FORCES IS WEAKENED BY THE DIFFERENCES AMONG THEM. ALTHOUGH THEY AGREE ON SOME TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS IN THE WEST BANK, THEY DISAGREE OVER THE EXTENT OF THE TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS ISRAEL OUGHT TO MAKE.

4. THEIR CAPACITY TO INFLUENCE POLICY IS ALSO UNDERCUT BY ISRAEL'S POLITICAL FRAMEWORK. THUS, THE RELATIVELY MODERATE MEMBERS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY WOULD HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO FORCE THEIR PARTY TO WITHDRAW FROM THE COALITION AND TO BREAK UP THE LIKUD IN ORDER TO GAIN A DECISIVE SAY IN FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS. THE LIBERALS ARE RELUCTANT TO DO THIS, GIVEN THEIR INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF BEING ALIGNED WITH HERUT. THE ALTERNATIVE OF AN ALLIANCE WITH THE LABOR PARTY, WHICH IS IDEOLOGICALLY DISTANT, OPPOSES LIBERAL ECONOMIC POLICIES, AND WAS A DISAPPOINTING COALITION PARTNER IN THE PAST, HAS LITTLE APPEAL.

5. THE DMC HAS LESS STAKE IN REMAINING IN THE COALITION. THE PARTY IS MORE LIKELY TO ACCEPT SIGNIFICANT TERRITORIAL

CONCESSIONS THAN THE LIBERALS AND WOULD BE BETTER ABLE TO COOPERATE WITH LABOR ON DOMESTIC POLICY. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS PARALYZED BY INTERNAL DIVISIONS. SENIOR PARTY LEADERS, MOREOVER, ENJOY BEING IN THE CABINET AND FEAR FOR THEIR POLITICAL FUTURES IF THE PARTY JOINED THE OPPOSITION. MOREHAWKISH ELEMENTS IN THE DMC ARE DISTURBED BY DAMAGE TO ISRAEL'S IMAGE CAUSED BY BEGIN'S ADAMANCY ON 242 AND SETTLEMENTS, BUT THEY ARE SYMPATHETIC TO THE POLICY OF RETAINING MAXIMUM TERRITORY ON THE WEST BANK. DISCONTENTED
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DMC DOVES THUS FAR HAVE STOPPED SHORT OF A PARTY SPLIT.

6. NRP MODERATES ARE CONSTRAINED BY THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL DIFFICULTY OF OPENLY ESPOUSING TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS ON THE WEST BANK. THEY ARE UNCERTAIN OF THEIR STRENGTH IN THE PARTY AND WANT TO AVOID A SPLIT. MEANWHILE, AGUDAT ISRAEL, WHICH IS WILLING TO COUNTENANCE WEST BANK TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS, IS CONCERNED MAINLY WITH RELIGIOUS ISSUES. THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT HAS PROVIDED A CONGENIAL ATMOSPHERE FOR THE AGUDAT AND HAS BEEN MORE RESPONSIVE TO ITS INTEREST THAN LABOR WAS IN THE PAST.

7. THE LABOR ALIGNMENT CONFRONTS SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN ATTEMPTING TO ESPOUSE A MORE FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE TOWARD NEGOTIATIONS. AMONG THESE DIFFICULTIES ARE:

(A) THE NEED TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF LINING UP WITH THE US AGAINST BEGIN, ESPECIALLY IN THE WAKE OF HIS US VISIT AND THE CLAMOR OVER THE ALLEGED EFFORT TO SEE HIM REPLACED;

(B) THE NEED TO MAINTAIN PARTY UNITY; THERE IS AN INFLUENTIAL COMPONENT IN LABOR THAT FAVORS SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY AND A TOUGH LINE ON THE TERRITORIES, BUT THERE IS ALSO CONCERN THAT BEGIN'S HARDLINE ON WEST BANK WITHDRAWAL WILL DESTROY THE CHANCES FOR PEACE AND THAT PEACE SHOULD NOT BE SACRIFICED FOR SETTLEMENTS.

(C) WHAT TO DO ABOUT PERES, WHO HAS DIFFICULTY EXERTING A MODERATING INFLUENCE IN VIEW OF HIS OWN LONG-TIME OPPOSITION TO TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS IN THE WEST BANK AND HIS PREVIOUS
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SUPPORT OF DAYAN'S CONCEPT OF "FUNCTIONAL" PARTITION OF THE WEST BANK.

8. A DECISIVE CONSIDERATION FOR MOST MODERATES CONCERNS

THE ALTERNATIVE TO BEGIN'S PROGRAM. THE KEY QUESTION FOR THEM IS WHETHER A MAJOR POLITICAL CRISIS WITHIN ISRAEL EVENTUALLY WOULD LEAD TO A PEACE ON TERMS ACCEPTABLE TO ISRAEL OR WHETHER THE RESULT WOULD BE A NEW CRISIS BETWEEN ISRAEL, ON ONE HAND, AND THE US AND EGYPT, ON THE OTHER, ONCE IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT EVEN THE MODERATES WERE UNWILLING TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THEIR POSITION AND EGYPT'S.

9. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, THE 242 ISSUE ASSUMES CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN ISRAEL. IN FACT, IT HAS ECLIPSED SETTLEMENTS AND BEGIN'S SINAI OFFER AS THE CENTERPIECE OF THE FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE. THE ISSUE OF THE NEW ISRAELI INTERPRETATION OF 242 HAS ENABLED THE ALIGNMENT TO ADOPT, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE NOVEMBER, SOMETHING OF A COHERENT POSITION. WHILE THE LABOR VIEW PROBABLY REFLECTS MAJORITY OPINION IN ISRAEL, IT WILL BE SOME TIME BEFORE LABOR CAN TRANSLATE THIS REALITY INTO A POWER BASE.

10. IT IS IN THIS RESPECT THAT THE "PEACE NOW" MOVEMENT AND THE "SECURE PEACE" COUNTERMOVEMENT ARE IMPORTANT. IF THEY SUCCEED IN POLARIZING THE COUNTRY, LABOR MAY BE PUSHED INTO DEVELOPING A MORE CONSISTENT AND POWERFUL POSITION. MOREOVER, IF THE COUNTRY BECOMES POLARIZED, PRESSURE WILL INCREASE ON THE LIBERALS AND THE DMC. SO FAR, DESPITE THEIR DIFFERENCES WITH BEGIN, IT HAS BEEN MORE ADVANTAGEOUS FOR THEM TO REMAIN IN THE GOVERNMENT OVER THE LONGER TERM. SHOULD A MAJORITY OF ISRAELIS OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT ON PEACE ISSUES, THE BENEFITS ACCRUING TO THE LIBERALS AND THE DMC BY REMAINING IN THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE GREATLY DIMINISHED. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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11. LEBANON. TOP CHRISTIAN LEADERS APPARENTLY REGARD THE SITUATION, PARTICULARLY IN BEIRUT, AS VERY TENSE AND BELIEVE THAT THE NEXT TWO WEEKS WILL BE CRITICAL. WHILE BLAMING PRESIDENT SARKIS FOR THE SYRIAN SHELLING OF CHRISTIAN RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS LAST WEEK, THEY LOOK TO THE APRIL 20 MEETING OF PARLIAMENT AS A BENCHMARK OF WHETHER THE LEBANESE (BOTH CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS) WOULD STAND AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS. IF THE SUNNI MUSLIMS STOOD WITH THE CHRISTIANS, WHICH APPEARS UNLIKELY, THE LEBANESE ARMY COULD BE USED AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS; IF NOT, THE CHRISTIANS WOULD STAND ALONE. A RESTRAINING FACTOR IS CHRISTIAN FEAR OF THE SYRIANS IN EAST BEIRUT, BUT THE SITUATION IS VERY SERIOUS.

12. SYRIA. THE SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON, MEANWHILE, HAS BEEN COMPLICATED BY THE ISRAELI INVASION OF THE SOUTH. THE SYRIANS FIND THEMSELVES FACED WITH SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES WITH THE "STEADFASTNESS FRONT," THE PALESTINIANS, AND WITH

VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS AS A RESULT OF THE INVASION. DAMASCUS HAS BEEN CRITICIZED BY ITS "STEADFASTNESS FRONT" ALLIES FOR NOT ASSISTING THE PALESTINIANS IN RESISTING THE ISRAELI INVASION AND FOR NOT BEING MORE HELPFUL IN THE TRANSSHIPMENT OF MEN AND SUPPLIES TO THE PALESTINIANS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. THE IRAQI MEDIA, IN PARTICULAR, HAS CONDUCTED A SHARP CAMPAIGN CRITICIZING THE SYRIANS.

13. WHILE IRAQI CRITICISM IS AN IRRITANT, STRAINS IN THE SYRIAN-LIBYAN RELATIONSHIP MAY BE MORE SERIOUS. EMBASSY TRIPOLI REPORTS THAT SINCE MARCH 20 SCORES OF POPULAR CONFERENCES HAVE BEEN HELD THROUGHOUT LIBYA TO DISCUSS DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. THESE COMMITTEES ENDORSED MAKING FINANCIAL AND MILITARY SUPPORT FOR
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DAMASCUS CONTINGENT ON SYRIA'S ADOPTION OF A RADICAL HARDLINE POLICY TOWARDS ISRAEL IN GENERAL AND SOUTH LEBANON IN PARTICULAR.

14. THE LACK OF SYRIAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE PLO DURING ISRAEL'S ATTACKS HAS ALTERED PALESTINIAN-SYRIAN RELATIONS. THE PALESTINIANS APPEAR TO DAMASCUS TO BE LESS DEPENDENT UPON SYRIA. BY STANDING ALONE AGAINST THE ISRAELIS, THE PALESTINIANS HAVE INCREASED THEIR SELF-ESTEEM AND EARNED THE RESPECT OF THE CONSERVATIVE ARAB REGIMES, GIVING THE PLO MORE ROOM TO MANEUVER IN THE INTER-ARAB POLITICAL ARENA.

15. THE SYRIANS ALSO FIND THEMSELVES IN A MORE DIFFICULT POSITION IN LEBANON. IT IS IN THE LEBANON ARENA THAT SYRIAN POLICY APPEARS TO HAVE SUFFERED ITS WORST SETBACK AS A RESULT OF THE ISRAELI INVASION. DAMASCUS HAS BEEN FORCED TO AGREE TO THE DEPLOYMENT OF UN FORCES TO SOUTHERN LEBANON, INCLUDING A STRONG FRENCH CONTINGENT. THEY HAD RESISTED THIS SUGGESTION FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS, PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE LEBANESE SITUATION MIGHT DIMINISH SYRIAN INFLUENCE IN LEBANON. MOREOVER, THE REDEPLOYMENT OF PALESTINIANS TO THE SOUTH, EVEN WITH LEBANESE GOVERNMENT APPROVAL, WOULD ALSO NOW NEED UN CONCURRENCE.

16. THE SYRIANS ALSO HAVE TO FACE THE INCREASED POSSIBILITY OF RENEWED HOSTILITIES IN LEBANON. THE PALESTINIANS FEAR CHRISTIAN ATTACKS ON THEM, AND THE CHRISTIANS ARE CONCERNED THAT PALESTINIANS, FLEEING THE ISRAELIS AND LOSING THEIR BASES IN THE SOUTH, WILL ESTABLISH NEW BASES IN NORTHERN LEBANON WHICH WILL THREATEN CHRISTIAN AREAS. THE CLASHES LAST WEEK IN SOUTHERN BEIRUT UNDERLINED FOR THE SYRIANS THAT THE CHRISTIANS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY AGGRESSIVE AND THAT THIS HOSTILITY IS LIKELY TO BE DIRECTED AT, AMONG OTHERS, THE SYRIANS SOLDIERS IN

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LEBANON. (SECRET) CHRISTOPHER

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